

Let us search, carefully but seriously, for financial reforms that will create a more stable world economy.

Let us push ahead more quickly and globally with food relief, pay our U.N. dues, pass fast track, and, above all, I urge the House to act without any further delay to pass our IMF quota. That is the very least we can do now in exerting responsible American leadership in the world.

AG CRISIS IN AMERICA

Mr. BAUCUS. Madam President, I stand before you today with a heavy heart.

Why? Because I am extremely disappointed and terribly frustrated that despite our best efforts, the Agriculture appropriations conference report has completely missed the mark in responding to the crisis in farm and ranch country.

As I see it, we had four issues that were worthy of bipartisan support in this conference.

Proposals that would have delivered immediate support to our producers suffering from unusually low prices and natural disasters.

Disaster assistance is necessary; uncapping those market assistance loans is necessary; mandatory price reporting; and, improved meat labeling—all would have helped just a little but would still have helped tremendously in view of the depths of the situation.

Perhaps we've come to a meeting of the minds on natural disaster assistance. And, we should. No one can argue that drought, disease, flooding, and now hurricanes have devastated crops across the board and across the country. But what brought us to this point in the first place; that is, the crisis facing rural America? Extraordinarily low prices, prices rivaling the disaster of the 1980s, with no end in sight. And what did our Republican ag conferees deliver? Thirteen cents a bushel for wheat.

To be honest, it is an outrage, it is an insult, it is a slap in the face to every hard-working, struggling, desperate grain farmer. And the so-called "relief" is equally inadequate for every commodity.

The agriculture conference committee looked at the options, including a package offered by Senators DASCHLE and HARKIN that would have lifted loan caps and extended the term of the marketing loan. But they shot it through the heart.

We should have laid aside our partisan politics and done what was right for folks back home—giving them relief enough to make it through the crisis so they don't lose their family farm this year. The Daschle-Harkin plan to lift loan caps would give our producers roughly 60 cents a bushel—not 13 cents but 60 cents—a far cry from the pittance included in the conference report.

I think we can do better. We must do better. In the 1980s we spent nearly \$16

billion in just 1 year to get through that agriculture crisis. Now we are asking for half of that on a one-time, 1-year bases. Is that too much to ask? Too much to ask to help provide some relief?

In Montana, the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that the Daschle-Harkin plan would provide Montana producers with \$100 million more than the plan of 13 cents proposed by the other side. Every precious dollar counts to those in Montana's largest industry.

What happened to the other parts of the package that passed the Senate—price reporting and mandatory imported meat labeling? We lost the fight to the House—an easy fight, a bipartisan fight. The result now is that we have a 6-month study on both price reporting and meat labeling—just a study.

You tell me how I can tell folks back home that they have to wait for a report when they already know things aren't right in the market. They see it every day. I hear it every day in telephone calls I make to home. When I go home and talk to producers worried about holding onto the farm, or the ranch, or passing it on to their children, these people aren't complainers, they are hard workers who believe in the land and doing what is best for their community.

If we do not help them, no one will. We don't need to study the problem more. Rather, we need to fix it. What will this conference report send home? It will send home rhetoric, not help them as they need help.

Madam President, we still have time. The clock is ticking. But I say let's get to work. We have to work together on both sides of the aisle to help people in our country, people who are not Democrats, people who are not Republicans, people who are not Independents—people who are America's farmers.

A decent cash influx for bad prices should be part of a bipartisan package; adequate disaster assistance and real price reporting and meat labeling. That is not asking much at all. That is what we should together agree to. Then together we can send a message from both sides of the aisle that we won't go home emptyhanded; that we are here to help our people; that this Congress did something right. It is simple. We should have sent this bill back to conference and crafted a package that would have really done something to halt this crisis. That is no longer an option.

I encourage my colleagues to vote against the conference report which will be before us. If the report is not adopted, that is, the vote is not successful, then I say let's go back to work and do the right thing. On the other hand, if the vote on the conference report is successful, as it may well be, then I expect the President will veto it, as he should. Maybe then we can sit down and roll up our sleeves and figure out a way to adequately help our people.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COCHRAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AGRICULTURAL, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1999—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the report will be stated.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee on conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 4101), have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses this report, signed by a majority of the conferees.

The Senate proceeded to consider the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of October 2, 1998.)

Mr. COCHRAN. Madam President, pending before the Senate at this time is the conference report on the fiscal year 1999 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. We present this conference report for the Senate's approval this afternoon.

The agreement provides total new budget authority of \$55.7 billion for programs and activities of the U.S. Department of Agriculture—except for the Forest Service, which is funded by the Interior appropriations bill—the Food and Drug Administration, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, and expenses and payments of the farm credit system. This is \$6 billion more than the fiscal year 1998 enacted level; it is \$1.9 billion less than the President's request level; it is \$192 million less than the House-passed bill, and it is \$1.1 billion less than the Senate-passed bill level.

The changes that were made in conference on mandatory funding requirements account for the overall increase from the fiscal year 1998 enacted level, principally reflecting a \$2.6 billion lower estimate for Food Stamp Program funding requirements, higher Child Nutrition Program expenses, and a \$7.6 billion increase in the payment to reimburse the Commodity Credit Corporation for net realized losses. The conference report also provides an additional \$4.2 billion in emergency appropriations to assist agricultural producers and others who have suffered financial hardship due to adverse weather conditions and loss of markets.

Including congressional budget scorekeeping adjustments and prior